



Council of International Fellowship

Council of International Fellowship 2021 Annual Report

www.cifinternational.com

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ABBREVIATIONS:

GA: General Assembly of CIF International
 BD: Board of Directors meeting of CIF International
 EC: Executive Committee of CIF International
 IPEP: International Professional Exchange Program
 VIPEP: Virtual International Professional Exchange Program
 CIP USA: Council of International Programs USA
 NB: National Branch of CIF International
 CP: Contact Person of CIF International

EDITORIAL BOARD: Executive Committee of CIF International
 EDITORIAL ADVISOR: Paul Dolan, Birmingham, UK.

Approved by the Board of Directors April 30, 2022

Welcome

2021 has again been a difficult year. No face-to-face International Professional Exchange Programs (IPEPs) could take place, and other activities had to be cancelled. Nevertheless,

- the bi-annual Conference 2021 was held in November online and based in Cyprus. This enabled many more professionals to participate, who could not have travelled to another country.
- Two national branches conducted virtual IPEPs (VIPEPs) with significant success.
- The meetings of the Executive Committee, the Board of Directors' meetings, as well as the General Assembly 2021, were held virtually; and even for elections CIF used an entirely new virtual system. As the Conference and the Election were so different from earlier ones, we decided to report on them in more detail.

CIF had to adapt to new circumstances and did so effectively. Communication has become easier and more flexible, and CIF invested in these new developments. There has been more reason to think about future developments. CIF's Executive Committee of six has three previously serving and three new members, who are all full of energy to develop the organization in new times, but with the long-established mission:

"Its purpose is to promote professional, cross-cultural and educational exchange for those working in the field of social services. The learning and sharing generated by the exchange provide opportunities for broadening professional as well as personal development and so contributes to peace and understanding."

As a president elected in unique circumstances, I conclude by expressing my thanks to everyone in CIF for helping to promote the organization, its activities and its values through these difficult times.

Elisabeth Fischbacher Schrobiltgen, President

International Professional Exchange Programs (IPEPs)

General IPEP information

As in 2020, it was not possible to have face to face programs: but two national branches (NBs), CIF Austria and CIF Finland, organized virtual IPEPs (VIPEPs), a great challenge and a unique experience for CIF.

Characteristics of the VIPEPs

13 applications were submitted for the VIPEPs: one candidate was rejected – because he didn't fulfill the program criteria, and one withdrew for personal reasons, so 11 participants completed the programs.

The Austrian program was for six days, from 15 to 20 of April; and the Finnish program for two weeks, from 8 to 23 of May.

Branches didn't report difficulties in recruitment; the participants found out about the program through the NBs and CPs, and some of them had been scheduled participants for IPEPs in 2020.

As it was the first VIPEP experience, all had to adjust to some issues related to different time zones due to participants being from different continents, and to technological aspects.

Organization of the VIPEPs

NBs used digital tools before and during the programs: Moodle-platform, Teams connection, WhatsApp groups (Finland), emails and Zoom meetings, with all the information in one tool – padlet.com - (Austria).

The VIPEPs were organized in cooperation with universities/social work schools and with the Association of Social Work (Finland).

Both VIPEPs had similar structures, with an orientation program, two evaluations (mid and final term), invited lecturers and online agency visits. They also included some experiences from host family living (videos and informal sessions) and social-cultural activities (a virtual sight-seeing tour and material in Moodle).

Participants' feedback

Both NBs agreed that it was an encouraging experience and that they got positive feedback. Most of the participants were very satisfied with the programs, in respect of the professional and cultural/social aspects.

They pointed out some difficulties about the length of the program: some said it was too short (Austria) and they missed the personal exchange element and host

family living. Interaction problems, in general and between the participants, were also mentioned.

Financial issues on VIPEPs

There was no fee for the participants.

Financial support and resources were provided from:

- CIF Members, and the FH Campus Vienna provided digital support (Austria).
- CIF Members and the Association of Social Work (Finland).

Organizational Activities

Board of Directors' meeting and General Assembly

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 Pandemic, the BD and GA meetings were held online in 2021. **The Board of Directors' meeting** was on August 14-15, 2021. Its highlights were:

- CIF Jordan was recognized as a national branch of CIF. Mr. Bassam Haddad took his seat in the BD meeting as the President of CIF Jordan.
- The Annual Activity Report, 2020, which had been sent beforehand to national branches, was presented by David Scheele, Vice-President.
- Astrid Sehmer, Treasurer, presented the Financial Report 2020, the Internal Auditors' Report for the years 2019 and 2020, and the Budget 2022 proposal. The CIF Executive Committee 2019-2021 relieved her from her responsibilities for the years 2019 and 2020/1.
- The Guidelines for Peace Projects, which were prepared by a working group, were accepted with changes made by the EC.
- The report of the Committee CIF 2028 was reviewed and discussed, in terms of the goals of the CIF 2028 and the Communication Strategy worked out in 2018/2019, and specifically whether they could be kept as they are or needed to be changed. They remained unchanged.
- Lisa Purdy (CIPUSA) mentioned that CIPUSA is planning to celebrate CIP's 70th anniversary in 2026.
- CIF Austria and CIF Finland presented and discussed their VIPEPs held in 2021, indicating the positive and negative aspects of the programs.
- The EC election took place virtually. The new EC was elected with 31 out of 32 eligible votes, more than ever before.

The **General Assembly** was held on November 6, 2021 during the CIF biennial Conference, again virtually. Elisabeth Fischbacher Schrobiltgen, the newly elected President of CIF, chaired the meeting. The new EC members, who will serve in the 2021-2023 period, were introduced.

The activities and reports (Annual reports, Financial reports, and Auditor's reports) for the period 2019-2020 were submitted; and a proposal for the release of the Board of Directors from further responsibility for the years 2019 and 2020 was accepted in accordance with Article 9 of the Statutes.

Executive Committee

Members	until August 15, 2021	from August 15, 2021
President	Mireille Boucher (France)	Elisabeth Fischbacher Schrobiltgen (Switzerland)
Vice President	David Scheele (Netherlands)	Merja Niemelä (Finland)
Treasurer	Astrid Sehmer (Germany)	Astrid Sehmer (Germany)
Secretary	Demet Gülaldi (Turkey)	Demet Gülaldi (Turkey)
Member at Large	Merja Niemelä (Finland)	Silvia Nutter (Argentina)
Member at Large	Margit Randaru (Estonia)	Maria José Sanchez Tera (Spain)

The first part of the report covers the period between **January 1 to August 15**, when Mireille Boucher was President of CIF International.

The year 2021 had started with the hope that CIF International would meet face-to-face for its activities; but the evolution of the pandemic did not allow this to happen.

We regularly reviewed the situation with the EC team and with the NBs and CPs. The challenge was to continue the life of CIF using new technologies. We had to cancel the face-to-face meetings of CIF International. The conference originally planned in India in November 2021 was cancelled. CIF Cyprus organised the thirty-fourth conference online, assisted by CIF Israel, CIF Switzerland and CIF Turkey. The outcome was a success, as was the GA.

A BD meeting was planned to take place in August in Tallinn, Estonia, but due to the health situation we decided collectively with the NBs to keep it online.

However, we were able to hold the last EC meeting face-to-face to prepare the online BD meeting and to organise the end of our mandate, since a new challenge – voting for the new EC – would be done online during the BD. At the last moment our Secretary of CIF International could not join us for practical reasons. However, she was able to participate in our online work.

We were able to work on the 2020 Activity report and it was presented during the August BD meeting and at the GA in November.

After its election the new EC team was able to start its work in August 2021.

The last two years have been destabilising for all our activities. Of course, we were not prepared for this, and we still had hopes that the situation would evolve positively more quickly.

Personally, as President of CIF International, I am delighted to have been able to work with motivated and competent teams during these eight years, even if the last two years have been especially difficult. The important thing has been to maintain links, and I wish success to the new team in place since August 2021.

Mireille Boucher, Past President

The second part of the report covers the period between **August 15 and December 31** during which Elisabeth Fischbacher Schrobiltgen was President.

The new Executive 2021-2023 was elected on August 15, virtually, during a period of lower Covid infection rates. None of us felt like meeting in person right away. But the CIF Conference 2021 and the General Assembly were coming up, giving little time for the Executive Committee to prepare itself. In short: a lot to do without knowing each other very well.

The transition succeeded: our meetings took place every few weeks by Zoom, dealing with

- handing over tasks, and working documents,
- organising our work, meetings, and administration,
- preparation of elements of the Conference 2021, such as the arrangements for the General Assembly 2021,
- organising the new website for use of members, the BD and EC,
- distributing a monthly letter to our members,
- organising a Zoom exchange between IPEP organizers of national branches early in January 2022,
- clarifying the future of the Committee CIF 2028, due to the fact that the moderator of this committee was elected President of CIF International.

In March 2022 we aimed to meet as an EC for the first time face-to-face, in order to define the most important tasks for the period 2021 to 2023. The overall goals of the Executive Committee were clear from the very beginning of our work: we keep our values and we adapt our goals and working methods to circumstances which are more demanding than ever. To do this, we need more cooperation than ever before with our national branches, our contact persons and with other organizations. 2021 was a good year to see this and prepare for action.

Committees

CIF International has a number of committees. Some of them are regular, such as the Election Committee and the Financial Advisory Committee, and others are temporary, such as Committee CIF 2028 and the Website Committee.

Regular Committees

Election Committee

Jane Ollendorff (USA), convener of the Election Committee, Ilse Hoffmann (Germany) and Mieke Weeda (Netherlands) had to change all their routines regarding elections. They did an excellent job; this is the reason for giving special attention to their work in publishing their detailed report on the 2021 elections, as an example how CIF often works today.

Mission

- Encourage CIF International national branches (NBs) to nominate qualified individual members to run for six executive committee (EC) positions, elected to serve two-year terms every other year by the Board of Directors (BD).
- Identify and encourage qualified candidates to seek nominations.
- Introduce candidates to the membership and chair the election portion of the BD meeting.
- In 2021, due to the COVID pandemic and inability to travel, the BD would have to meet virtually, so our additional task became to complete the entire process using online technology in a manner that respected the confidentiality of the votes.

Process highlights

- Identified ten potential candidates, using the 'Meet and Greet the Candidates' election committee event at the 2019 in-person CIF Conference held at Saint Malo, France.
- Prepared articles for two issues of CIF World News encouraging interest, nominations and listing specific qualifications.
- February 2021, BD appointed new committee member Mieke Weeda.
- Sent nomination request letters and reminders to all branches and contact persons.
- Contacted both individuals from potential candidate lists and branch presidents regarding interest in nominations.
- Identified eight candidates for the six positions by mid-May 2021.
- BD meeting changed to being virtual; confirmed the need to use technology to conduct the actual election.

- In place of the usual in-person speeches, each candidate was asked to prepare a written biography with a portrait photograph, and create a video clip speaking about their qualifications and why they wanted to be elected to the EC.
- Posted the biographies, photos and videos on the newly upgraded CIF-International website 'members only page', for viewing by the membership prior to the election.
- Encouraged branches to meet as a group to view the video speeches and determine how their branch president should vote at the election to be held during the BD meeting in August.
- Held Election Committee meetings using a combination of Zoom and WhatsApp, plus email, telephone, and website.

Voting Technology

- Election Committee evaluated the use of available technology to allow private and confidential voting.
- An election application tool called 'Choice Voting', used by non-profit organizations, was identified as a potential resource by EC Secretary, Demet Gülaldi.
- Election committee investigated this, and received training from Choice Voting regarding how to set up an election and receive automated confidential results. Once set up, this offered the best inexpensive electronic method for the CIF EC election.
- Ilse Hoffmann-Klee led the Election Committee through the election set-up and several practice sessions, first with family and friends, and later a "Fairytale" test voting process with members of the BD, in order to learn how to best use the tool.
- Successful use of Choice Voting required: obtaining the correct email address for each BD voting member, clear communication of rules about how to mark the ballots, identifying a specific time to vote (varying across time zones) so as to complete and tabulate the voting, and of course full cooperation from EC and BD members.

Evaluation and Results

The Election Committee evaluated the entire process one week after the election; evaluation results were shared with the EC and BD.

Election Participation:

32 eligible voters

31 votes received

28 by Choice Voting

3 by email

1 missed the election

On August 15, 2021, BD members representing 30 branches and CIPUSA, from five continents, elected by majority vote the following EC members to serve CIF International from 2021-2023:

President: ELISABETH FISCHBACHER SCHROBILTGEN (Switzerland)
Vice President: MERJA NIEMELÄ (Finland)
Secretary: DEMET GÜLALDI (Turkey)
Treasurer: ASTRID SEHMER (Germany)
Member at Large: SILVIA NUTTER (Argentina)
Member at Large: MARIA JOSÉ SÁNCHEZ TERA (Spain).

This first online CIF election would not have been possible without the cooperation of the CIF Executive Committee, branches, webmaster, World News editor, and CIF members worldwide, and especially the closely working team of committee members: Ilse Hoffmann-Klee (Germany), Mieke Weeda (Netherlands) and Jane Ollendorff, convener (USA).

Jane Ollendorff, Convener

Financial Advisory Committee

Members

Astrid Sehmer (Germany),
Gabi Kronberger (Austria),
Lisa Purdy (CIPUSA)

No meetings were held in 2021.

Temporary Committees

Committee CIF 2028

Members

Elisabeth Fischbacher Schrobiltgen (CIF Switzerland, convener),
Ya-Chuan Hsu (CIF Switzerland and CIF Taiwan),
Lisa Purdy (CIF USA),
Margit Randaru (CIF Estonia, EC),
Tina Trygg (CIF Sweden).

The Committee CIF 2028 was established in 2017. Results so far are the revised Manual for IPEPs, the Communication Strategy 2019, and a new website of CIF

International in 2019. The last report was dated March 4, 2021, but as there was no BD meeting in April 2021, another report followed, sent to the BD-Meeting of August 14, 2021. At this point the BD-Meeting decided that the 2028 goals were to remain the same, including developments in recent years and in particular since 2020. The report to the BD-Meeting of August 14, 2021, stated:

“Unfinished Business

For CIF International to be attractive in 2028 (and considering the changing world) there are still several tasks to fulfil which need creativity, special attention, special knowledge and more time to find practical solutions to be developed further, such as:

- development of special (virtual and other) IPEPs, adapting them to new travel and health conditions,
- looking at questions such as “What could be brought by participants to the visited country, beyond the specific cultural items traditionally taken ?”
- exploring potential finance to support professionals from Africa and certain parts of Asia to participate in (V)IPEPs and for some other parts/countries/participants in financial need,
- examining the nature of conferences in the context of COVID and environmental issues, and also their attraction for younger professionals,
- clarifying and monitoring the tasks and the format of CIF’s Facebook presence and a number of other tasks regarding communications (and co-operation) of CIF International and their NBs,
- addressing other tasks, depending on future developments.”

In addition, the convener of the Committee CIF 2028 has become president of CIF International and with this a member of the Executive Committee. She therefore has distinct roles and wears “two hats”. Margit Randaru, then liaison person EC-Committee CIF 2028, wanted to withdraw from this position at a time when it would be clear what the next steps are to be.

The BD invited the new Executive Committee to discuss the future of the Committee CIF 2028 jointly with the Committee. This was completed on December 22, 2021, and resulted in the following proposals to the next BD Meeting:

- “The BD is invited to thank the Committee CIF 2028 for its intense and creative work during the last four years and to release it from further responsibilities.
- The EC/BD is to decide upon priorities, and if they cannot do the associated work themselves, to entrust particular tasks - such as from the list of unfinished business - to working groups with clear goals, terms, conditions, and members assigned. The EC/BD usually leads or assists groups whenever this is possible and useful.

- Depending on particular questions being identified or on new developments, the EC could form an advisory committee, with persons/specialists from all continents if possible, and who might meet, for example, once a year online.
- All members of the Committee CIF 2028 are ready to cooperate in relation to particular themes.”

CIF International Website

Developing Website Committee

Members

Annika Frank (CIF Sweden)

Ilse Hoffmann-Klee (CIF Germany, convener)

Shu Hui (CIF Taiwan)

Lisa Purdy (CIPUSA)

David Scheele (CIF Netherlands, EC).

Merja Niemelä (CIF Finland, EC)

Margit Randaru (CIF Estonia, EC) joined the Committee for the last part of the work.

A CIF Website Committee was tasked with the job to create a new website for CIF International in 2019. Our Committee worked together for a year to think strategically and to design a website for CIF that would be interesting for today's audience; and include direct emails to inquire about IPEP programs, a donation page and a private area for CIF members to review CIF documents. The Committee is pleased with the final design, and that we were able to stay within the budgeted amount for this task.

Lisa Purdy, CIPUSA

CIF Website further activity

Transfer of duties regarding the website to the new EC

On October 12, an online meeting was held to provide information related to the functioning of the website, with the purpose of getting to know the website management arrangements and the resolution of questions for the new EC members.

Webpage and member document center space

During 2021 the following information was posted on the website and also on the document center for access by members:

- IPEPs of the different countries being offered,
- Material from the 34th CIF International Conference held virtually in November,
- Information about the next conference to be held in 2023, Germany,
- Letter to members - monthly frequency.
- World News, back to 2013.

Pineapple Web Digital Agency: host website company

Coordination was carried out with Julien Ferard, the digital marketing specialist at Pineapple Web, the company responsible for hosting the CIF website, to introduce the new people in charge of the website, consultation and resolution of doubts.

Financial Report

INCOME: € 5.681.

Due to the facts that there was no face-to-face CIF International conference and there were no donations, the annual membership fees were the only revenue for the year. Every national branch is responsible for ensuring that 10 or 5 Euros for every member go as annual membership fee to the bank account of CIF International, the amount depending on the financial situation of countries.

In 2021 the membership fee was paid in respect of 511 members. Some payments were also based on years before 2021. From countries where money transfer expenses are too high, CIF International agrees to have fees paid as a group and even in cash when practically feasible.

The bookkeeping of CIF International is based on real payments/expenses and does not include "debts" of members.

EXPENDITURE: € 7.075.

The main costs were the second half of the costs for our new website (€ 3.500). We also had costs for one face-to-face EC meeting (Tallinn, August 2021) (€ 1.593). All other meetings, including the Board of Directors' Meeting and the General Assembly, were held by Zoom. It should be mentioned here that all CIF members work on a voluntary basis, there are no meeting fees, and often no expenses allowance. Many also support CIF financially. Therefore, we would like to thank all of them for their commitment, both at international and national level.

The magazine of CIF International is CIF World News. It is now only published digitally, as of 2020. The layout of one issue costs € 450; in 2021 CIF produced one issue.

The Peace Project, and any associated expenditure, had to be postponed again to 2022 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

CIF International subsidized its first virtual conference, organized by CIF Cyprus in November 2021, with a payment of € 1.000.

DEFICIT: € 1.394.

This affects the assets. At the end of the year 2021 CIF had an asset value of € 74.646,35.

Most of the money is at the Sparkasse Koblenz in Germany. Unfortunately there is no interest at the moment. A small part, of around € 2.500, is invested with S Broker, the online broker of the Sparkasse Financial group.

The assets include the following earmarked funds: HB Ollendorff /M Ollendorff Fund, S & P Unger Fund and Peace Project Fund. All together amount to € 14.982.

The audit of the accounts 2021 was done by CIF Germany's members Dorte Feierabend and Conny Zwar.

The full accounts 2019 & 2020, and the 2022 Budget, were presented by the CIF Treasurer, together with the confirmation of the independent audit, at the meeting of the Board of Directors on 14-15 August 2021. They were accepted and presented to the General Assembly on November 6, 2021. The General Assembly released the Board of Directors from all further responsibility for 2019 and 2020.

Donations are very welcome to maintain and improve the work of CIF International. Here is the relevant information:

Name: Council of International Fellowship e.V.
IBAN: DE02 5705 0120 0000 1884 25
BIC-Code: MALADE51KOB
Bank: Sparkasse Koblenz (Germany)

For all further information please contact the Treasurer of CIF International, Astrid Sehmer: treasurer@cifinternational.com.

PROFIT & LOSS STATEMENT per December 31, 2021

in Euro

	Profit & Loss	Budget	Profit & Loss
	2020	2021	2021
Income			
Membership fees	6.638,54	6.700,00	5.681,00
Fundraising	0,00	500,00	0,00
Donations, Fundraising Peace Projects	0,00	500,00	0,00
Other donations, Legacies	23.624,58	500,00	0,00
Total Income	30.263,12	8.200,00	5.681,00
Expenses			
Travel & board EC	2.300,50	3.500,00	1.593,16
Travel & board BD	325,00	1.500,00	0,00
Grants	0,00	1.000,00	0,00
World News (Layout)	900,00	900,00	450,00
Internet expenses, Social media	149,09	400,00	0,00
Website	3.500,00	3.500,00	3.500,00
Administrative expenses	135,20	100,00	338,05
Bank charges	176,59	0,00	102,76
New national branches	0,00	200,00	0,00
Peace Projects	0,00	0,00	0,00
Other expenses	0,00	100,00	1.091,75
Total Expenses	7.486,38	11.200,00	7.075,72
Operating results	22.776,74	-3.000,00	-1.394,72

ASSETS 2021, December 31

in Euro

	2020	2021
SPK Koblenz Bank Account	75.032,51	21.100,99
Money Market Account	108,56	50.108,56
S Broker Depot		2.536,80
Transferred Grants Peace Projects	900,00	900,00
Capital of the Organization	76.041,07	74.646,35

The assets include the following earmarked funds

HB Ollendorff/M. Ollendorff Fund	7.387,74	7.387,74
S & P Unger Fund	5.958,86	5.958,86
Peace Project Fund	1.635,59	1.635,59
Earmarked funds	14.982,19	14.982,14

Grants

No grants were awarded in 2021: all meetings were held online, without fees or travelling costs.

Peace Project activities

The CIF Board Meeting decided in November 2020 to give a task to three persons, Anna Caldarone (CIF Italy), Tina Trygg (CIF Sweden), with Merja Niemelä (EC) as convener, to work together and present the Guidelines for Peace Projects in August 2021. Their task was to work on the Peace Project Guidelines putting all together (definition and goals of Peace Projects) in line with CIF's mission and goals.

These three worked as a group and met online several times. They prepared a draft that was sent to NBs for comments in February 2021. The Guidelines document was finally accepted in the BD meeting of August 2021.

The main change in the guidelines compared to those previously is in the definition of Peace. Also some general aspects have been added.

CIF Israel was given 900 Euros for their peace project in the year 2020. Because of the pandemic, CIF Israel had to postpone the project again to next year.

World News Magazine



World News is the CIF magazine, produced twice a year with the main purpose to inform, to exchange ideas and create and sustain networks for and with CIF members and the general public globally. World News (WN) includes information on all the "happenings" of the current year, offers updates about the organization, including information on events, issues, accomplishments, projects, IPEPs and much more. World News serves as a means of raising awareness about CIF and its public image, and is used by members and other people around the world to assist them understand what CIF does, acknowledge the impact of CIF on societies, and inspire them to become CIF members in their own countries.

WN is published on the CIF website and distributed in digital form to all CIF members.

Maria Christopoulou, World News Editor

CIF National Branches

At December 31, CIF had a total of 31 National Branches (NBs) plus CIP USA:
CIF National Branches (NBs) include:

Algeria	France	Morocco	Sweden
Aotearoa/ New Zealand	Germany	Nepal	Switzerland
Argentina	Greece (Hellas)	Netherlands	Taiwan
Austria	India	Norway	Turkey
Cameroon	Israel	Palestine	United States
Cyprus	Italy	Russia	CIP USA
Estonia	Japan	Scotland	
Finland	Jordan	Slovenia	
	Kyrgyzstan	Spain	

CIF Jordan was accepted by the BD as a national branch in 2021.
No other branches were established, and none ceased their activities.

Members

The total reported number of CIF members in 2021 was 819 (this number includes also the CPs; CIP USA pays no fees, so no members are counted). This is an increase of 2% in relation to 2020.

Summary of the CIF National Branch activities

All National Branches and CIPUSA provided information by sending their Annual Activity Reports (AARs). Some reported that they had no activities. The following is a summary and some highlights based on these reports.

Public relations and distributing information to members

The national branches (NBs) used many types of contact; virtual meetings, Facebook, monthly letters, e-mails. They have bought their own Instagram, Zoom and Teams accounts. To inform all the members and increase transparency within the branch organization many mailed newsletters became regular.

Some tried to maintain links with their partners by ZOOM, Teams and using other means of interactive contact. Links were also maintained by writing articles in specialized social worker newspapers. Also participation was possible, with a booth in an online "market place". Local district and national governments have been contacted.

New websites were organised and social media pages were updated on a regular basis. Members and professionals were encouraged to participate in the CIF conference. Information on IPEP experiences was distributed, and lectures and workshops given.

NBs also sent letters to members via conventional post. Some had the possibility to meet face to face.

National and international activities/projects (apart from IPEPs)

Some NBs said that it was difficult to direct public attention to CIF activities because there was not much interest in virtual programs and other virtual events. Some branches continued to help promote CIF principles within workplaces and associated agencies, with the aim of recruiting placements and new members. Also fundraising was organized.

CIF Argentina, CIF Spain and CP Costa Rica had a project to foster CIF's international goals and IPEPs among Spanish speaking professionals. They prepared four video presentations on CIF in Spanish and subtitled in English. These materials were prepared for the website of CIF and were shared with different associations of social workers, mainly in Latin America, the Caribbean and Spain. CIF Cameroon, with a partner, has jointly reached out and supported 2500 internally displaced persons and older persons, providing them with wash kits to enable them to take care of their domestic needs. In collaboration with district health services they carried out mass community sensitisation on COVID-19. 3230 facemasks and 5540 bottles of alcohol-based hand sanitizers were distributed to 54 communities.

CIPUSA hosted a Sister City Project involving Cleveland and Volgograd, Russia. CIPUSA created 8 virtual workshops for 207 middle school and high school students on diplomacy building. They also hosted a photo contest for the students called "My City Through My Eyes."

CIF Cyprus organized the first virtual CIF international conference in collaboration with 3 other NBs.

CIF Estonia hosted an EC-meeting in Tallinn. It was not possible to have a face-to-face BD-meeting.

CIF France continued the ECCAY "Empowering and Co-Constructing Agency of Young people at risk of exclusion" European project, with 4 other CIF partners: Italy, Austria, Spain, Romania. It was a real challenge because they never met face-to-face but only in video meetings. It is limited by this and does not allow full exchanges between the partners. This project is planned to end in July 2022, with hopes for a face-to-face meeting between the partners.

CIF Germany gathered 26 members in a conference hostel in Kassel and were happy to experience face-to-face contact again. The Board is working intensively on planning the CIF-Conference in 2023 in Hannover.

CIF Greece organized in January a virtual event simulating the traditional „cutting of the New Year's pie". In March they conducted a virtual workshop on "my music...my narration...my power".

CIF Israel organized a professional-social trip for CIF Israel members in the northern part of the country.

CIF India. To make the whole process transparent, CIF India contacted their members for their opinion on hosting the Conference 2025. The response was positive.

CIF Kyrgyzstan has signed an agreement on cooperation with the International University of Kyrgyzstan.

New activities

CIPUSA is working on a climate initiative that will focus on environmental injustices. There is also a human trafficking initiative, consisting of a series of workshops on the subject.

CIF Cyprus points out the increased possibilities for networking and expanding information and training with countries all over the world, and people who up to now could not join in because of distance or/and finances; but now, with online communication, this has been easier to accomplish.

CIF Finland has made plans for CIF MINIPEP-programs or shorter visits between two CIF countries.

CIF Germany has established a new forum via ZOOM called „CIF-online-forum".

CIF Nepal has increased the awareness of people on using masks, social distancing, and health and hygiene.

Co-operation between national branches and CIF International

Many NBs participated in the activities organized by CIF International. Cooperation was mainly online and via teleconferencing. Mostly things worked well, cooperation was useful and fruitful, and exchanges were positive.

NBs mentioned with appreciation the monthly letters from the CIF Executive Committee as a way to have regular contact and to be aware of news. The CIF International new website and other activities were also mentioned positively.

They reported that the organization of virtual BD-meetings, the EC election and the virtual Conference with the General Assembly was really great. It was challenging and sometimes exhausting to have contacts virtually, but very helpful to stay in contact. Virtual contacts are only a substitute and many hope to have face-to-face meetings in future again.

For some NBs it was difficult to engage members for the digital CIF World Conference due to late notification of information about dates and the conference program. Some activities were during national holidays, on Saturday and late evenings on Sundays, which did not help attendance or to feel connected.

Mostly the feedback was very positive.

Contact person and branch development

CIF has 15 Contact Persons in Australia, China, Costa Rica, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Madagascar, Pakistan, Philippines, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Tanzania, Tunisia and Vietnam.

Jordan was accepted by the BD as a national branch in 2021.

In 2021 no new contact persons were appointed.

The number of past IPEP participants living in the country of any CP ranges from 1 to 9 persons.

The CPs have been in touch with other past participants through WhatsApp, email and virtual meetings. CP Romania mentioned that because of distance and the pandemic there were no meetings. CP Portugal has been in contact with former participants by phone.

CP success stories

Most activities mentioned by the CPs have been about taking part in CIF activities; acting as observer in the virtual BD-meeting, dealing with applications sent to IPEPs, participation in a VIPEP, and having virtual meetings in their own country.

Costa Rica's CP has been working together with CIF Spain and CIF Argentina to disseminate CIF programs so that (Spanish speaking) colleagues from Latin America know about CIF and can participate.

The CPs from Tunisia and Madagascar mentioned that CIF France supports them.

Challenges

The biggest challenges in involving people in IPEPs are lack of foreign language knowledge, financial aspects, a need for support; and also the ages of the social workers. Contacts with institutions and universities to expand cooperation are needed.

Another challenge has been technical difficulties restricting participation in digital activities. Because of the pandemic this has been even more difficult.

CPs have a positive attitude to the future after the pandemic. There are more possibilities to travel, as mentioned by the CP Vietnam.

Status and activity

Five CPs (of the 15) did not send the requested response in 2021. These are Australia, China, Latvia, Philippines and Serbia. We have not heard from the Philippines CP in the four years since her acceptance as a CP.

CIF International Conference

34th International Conference of CIF International

Hosted virtually by CIF-Cyprus, 5-7 November 2021, in cooperation with CIF branches in Israel, Switzerland and Turkey.

For the first time in the history of CIF our international conference was virtual. The idea of a virtual conference raised a lot of questions as it was something new and something unknown, but in the end it was decided to go forward instead of NOT having a conference due to pandemic restrictions.

For the first time, people who had never had the chance to participate in any of CIF's International conferences, either because of financial reasons or geographical location, were able to attend this virtual conference. This was very exciting to organize and participate in. It was inspiring for all participants, but also especially for us, the long-standing members of CIF.

350 people registered from 46 countries around the globe. Even though not all were present during all workshops, we knew that they would benefit by watching the recordings once receiving notice of the presentations. Maybe the experience was not as satisfying as meeting face to face, but we met without worrying about any health restrictions, and successfully exchanged news, concerns and opportunities.

The theme of the Conference was:

Best Practices in Times of Crisis—New challenges and opportunities in the pandemic era in relation to families and children

This theme was chosen based on the experiences of front-line social workers and other professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the impact it had on social services users and other vulnerable groups. This demanded adaptation of professional practice through innovative interventions.

The Conference started with the keynote speaker setting the general theme of the Conference, followed by three workshops with specialized themes:

- social solidarity in response to COVID 19 and the lessons we learned
- social support for children and their families in times of pandemic, and
- the impact of the pandemic on families and children with special needs.

In each workshop there was a presentation for 20 minutes, followed by two professionals who presented for another 10 minutes the good practices from their own experience in their country. The workshop participants were divided into groups to discuss the theme further.

The Conference ended on Sunday with parallel presentations on different subjects, such as The Impact of COVID and Resilience, Youth climate activism in times of COVID 19, Save our food, Make empathy great again, Helping children and their parents cope and build strong relationships during COVID 19, Pandemic and Resilience, The impact of the pandemic on the practice dimension of social work: the case of the USA and Turkey, and Repairing social bonds through social mediation. There were also group presentations from the workshops.

Results

Although each community has its own ways of dealing with the effects of the pandemic on health, social, economic, mental, and emotional issues, all participants from all countries had similar experiences of how the pandemic affected families and children.

Overall, it led to a deterioration of mental health, an increase in domestic violence and inequalities worldwide, plus affecting the workforce as a whole and increasing the pressure on social workers to provide their services in a professional way.

Restrictions in movement, the closure of borders, and stopping all cultural and other events have had a great impact on societies. At the same time the cost of food increased while income dropped, leaving social services users in a strange and difficult situation.

Limited direct contact with clients/service users caused concern for social workers not being able to access their living environment. Having less support in difficult and frustrating working circumstances led to an adjustment to new methods of working. Working remotely, while children had online education, was very hard for parents to handle. There was inadequate knowledge by social workers on how to be protected during the pandemic, and how to disseminate such knowledge to service users.

In view of the above, it is obvious that social work skills are very valuable. New skills were introduced, things are now working in a different mode, and have taken a new direction. We need to apply, to accept, to learn, to see things with a positive viewpoint and look forward. Societies cannot survive without solidarity. All sectors, all stakeholders are significant. Although maybe it is still early to evaluate the impact on the possibilities of resilience, we know there will be repercussions on children's learning processes, as well as on their mental and emotional development.

Maria Christopoulou, CIF Cyprus